

Environmental Justice and the CALFED Bay-Delta Program
DRAFT – August 14, 2002

You might ask, “What is environmental justice?” The term was forged out of people and communities seeking environmental protection from disproportionate risks from environmental hazards affecting peoples’ quality of life. Environmental justice means that all people, regardless of race, culture, national origin, or income, are able to enjoy equal environmental protection.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency defines environmental justice as:

“The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Fair treatment means that no group of people, including racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic group should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, local, and tribal programs and policies.”

Everyone is entitled to high levels of protection from environmental hazards, and should be able to enjoy the benefits of healthy and safe environment in which to live, work, play and learn. Historically, groups such as the poor, communities of color, and inner-city inhabitants, have been excluded from the setting of environmental policy. Without a voice in the decision-making process, these communities may experience low levels of enforcement of environmental regulations and requirements. As a result, these communities may bear a disproportionate impact from one or more environmental hazards. Environmental justice attempts to address inequities of environmental protection in communities.

Environmental justice means:

- That for all communities, everyone is able to live healthier lives as well as enjoy the benefits of a clean and safe environment
- Diversification of the decision-making process by calling for involvement of all people and communities;
- Encouragement of a more equitable distribution of economic benefits;
- Encouragement of communities themselves to take action towards improving their environment;
- Increases awareness, understanding and effective cooperation within and among communities;
- The right of all people to equal treatment under the laws and regulations of the United States.

The CALFED Program and its participating agencies are committed to seeking fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes, such that all segments of the population shall enjoy the benefits of the CALFED Program activities, and none shall bear a disproportionately high or adverse health, environmental, social or economic

impact resulting from CALFED programs, policies, or actions. The CALFED Program's Solution Principles relate directly to the principles of environmental justice: reduce conflicts in the system, be equitable, be affordable, be durable, be implementable and have no significant redirected impacts.

The CALFED Program held environmental justice training in cooperation with the US EPA to advance the understanding of environmental justice. Working in cooperation with the Environmental Justice Coalition for Water, CALFED held a series of regional workshops, geographically dispersed across the state, to hold discussions and gain input on environmental justice issues related to Program actions.

In December, 2001, the Bay-Delta Public Advisory Committee convened the Environmental Justice Subcommittee as a formal advisory subcommittee to work to achieve the goal of integration of environmental justice into all CALFED Program elements.

An Environmental Justice Workplan has been developed that outlines a two-tiered approach to addressing EJ within the Program. The first tier outlines a long-term planning process that will:

- Develop environmental justice goals and objectives;
- Establish an overall environmental justice strategy for the Program to achieve the goals and objectives;
- Develop annual plans to implement the strategy;
- **Assist in compliance with all relevant federal and state orders and statutes.**

The second tier addresses short-term goals to be addressed while long-term strategies are developed. These goals include:

- Effective strategies for public participation (including workshops and workgroups);
- Inclusion of environmental justice criteria in all upcoming project solicitation proposals;
- Adequate consideration of social and economic impacts in environmental documentation;
- Environmental justice training and education for agency and program staff;
- Collection and analysis of new demographic information and data, **focusing on CALFED site-specific programs or activities that are developing environmental documents that tier of the Programmatic EIS/EIR;**
- Adequate staffing and financial resources (including capacity building);
- Compliance with all relevant federal and state orders and statutes.

Any public or private party with an interest in environmental justice, or would like information on the Environmental Justice Subcommittee or environmental justice within the CALFED Program, can visit our web site at <http://calfed.ca.gov> or to sign up for general program information by mail, call (916) 657-2666.